

## **SPONSOR A CHILD IN THE BACKPACKS FOR KIDS PROGRAM**

Food for People's New Mailing Address: PO Box  
4922, Eureka, CA 95502



The Eureka Pantry has moved to **2112 Broadway St.**



# Food for People

*The Food Bank for Humboldt County*

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## **Sewage Inundation Temporarily Closes Food for People**



Early Friday morning February 28th, we arrived at our main site at 307 W. 14th Street in Eureka to find two-thirds of our building swimming in several inches of sewer matter and water due to a city sewer malfunction. The hardest hit of our programs is our on-site Eureka Choice Pantry (which includes our main entrance lobby), followed by our middle warehouse space that stores the back stock for the Choice Pantry. A small amount of the food in the middle warehouse space serves some of our 17

other programs, but the food loss is primarily to our Eureka Choice Pantry. The middle warehouse typically stores anywhere up to a month (or less) of food to supply that one program.

In our middle warehouse space, wooden pallets of food were sitting in several inches of sewer matter and water. The wooden pallets absorbed and wicked this up and then began to transfer the liquid to layers of the cardboard cases of food sitting on the pallets, and onward to the food labels and cans or boxes of food. It was clear that not only was there no way any of the half dozen or so agencies that monitor us would ever be alright with that food being distributed to the public, but we would never take a chance that one of our program participants could become ill from it, or worse. No one's life is worth that risk.

In order to give the company we worked with for cleanup and remediation the space they needed to begin sanitizing, their employees and our staff immediately began the work of emptying out the affected spaces, including the middle warehouse. Our staff forklifted pallets to one area designated for disposal. Smaller pallets were double-stacked with our forklift, to take up as little room as possible and allow more of the middle warehouse to be sanitized. The company has been running a fleet of industrial dehumidifiers nontstop throughout the building. Some of the pallets and cases of food may have appeared dry and normal-looking on Monday, however that was not the case in the days prior. Food safety is a top priority, and everyone, at every income level, deserves safe food.

- Food for People helps more than 12,000 individuals across Humboldt County every month
- $\frac{1}{3}$  of the people we serve are children
- $\frac{1}{4}$  of the people we serve are seniors, who struggle to survive on low, fixed incomes
- More than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the people we serve are on disability
- We serve many who are medically fragile, some living with serious illness and compromised immune systems, and some enrolled in home hospice care
- Many of those we serve are working families that are underemployed and do not earn enough to survive
- 9 out of 10 of those served are housed

## **Food Loss**

To put the food loss in perspective, the majority of the \$40,000 worth of food that we had to dispose of is the typical amount that supplies our Eureka Choice Pantry for up to one month, and a smaller portion was destined for other programs. The majority is food we receive from the USDA and food we purchase regularly through several grants and contracts. Thankfully, our back warehouse space, which stores much more food in its own self-contained environment, was unaffected.

We continue to receive food deliveries daily into our unaffected warehouse spaces. For these reasons, the majority of our programs (primarily those that occur off-site) have been able to continue without interruption. We take food safety very seriously, and we are not willing to risk the public's health with one month's worth of the Choice Pantry's food, not to mention that it would violate a host of food safety regulations that would put our entire organization and the large network of county partners we provide food to in jeopardy. We can replace the food that was lost. For the more than 1,200 households that visit our Choice Pantry each month, consisting of 2,500 individual family members of all ages, no one's life or health will be risked.

Our goal is to continue to meet the needs of our clients and ensure minimal disruption to our services. Our staff is working extremely hard to keep program services operating as close to normal as possible. Although we are temporarily unable to process food donations at this time, financial donations are encouraged. Community members are invited to donate online through [this secure giving link](#).

## Communications

Due to the damage in our lobby and former Choice Pantry area, our building at 14th Street is currently closed to the public. Please [click here to visit our Contacts page](#), to determine the best way to get in touch with the specific program or staff member you may be trying to reach. For the timebeing, we are unable to have a receptionist answering calls at our 14th Street location. If you call, you will hear a recording and a menu of programs/staff and phone extensions. The phone number of the new off-site Choice Pantry is provided on the recording, and folks seeking the Choice Pantry or volunteer services will need to call the new Choice Pantry number (also listed below). You can press the phone extension for our other staff and other 17 programs at any time during the recording.

## Program Services

### Choice Pantry:

Our formerly on-site Choice Pantry was most affected, primarily due to the physical damage to the space, which includes our main entrance lobby and reception area. Work crews had to tear out the damaged walls and flooring in that entire affected wing of the building, to continue remediation. The building must be closed to the public. Our staff continues to operate off-site distributions at the usual locations we bring our programs to.

**We have secured an alternate location in Eureka for the Choice Pantry.** The Eureka Choice Pantry is now open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 11:00 am-3:00 pm at 2112 Broadway, Eureka (at the corner of W. Hawthorne St., next to the bowling alley). New phone number for **only** the Choice Pantry and volunteer services: [\(707\) 407-0447](#). (You can still reach our other staff and other 17 programs at our main number.)

Please call the new Choice Pantry to make an appointment before visiting. We have developed specific illness prevention protocols at the Choice Pantry and in all of our distribution programs. Households must make an appointment before visiting the Choice Pantry, so we can keep distributions safe for all involved. All Choice Pantry distributions are temporarily taking place outside. We are making our way toward a drive-through model, to further promote "social distancing" while we work to meet households' needs. Food will temporarily be pre-bagged ahead of time by gloved staff and volunteers. Expect a check-in station, where staff will fill out paperwork (to avoid sharing pens) and then a food pick-up station.

### Mobile Produce Pantry:

- We are working hard to find alternative ways to get fresh produce out to our Mobile Produce Pantry site communities, in a manner that is as safe as possible and in line with illness prevention and "social distancing" procedures. Produce will either be pre-bagged, or bagged up at the site for participants by our staff. Please stay tuned for updates.

### **Senior & Homebound Delivery Programs:**

- There will be no interruption to our regularly-scheduled Senior and Homebound program site distributions or deliveries. We have implemented illness prevention procedures to make distributions as safe as possible for all, with a combination of drive-through/car-side service methods and home deliveries, depending on the senior site. Many of the established program sites at senior apartments/complexes will receive home delivery. Many of the sites that are not at senior apartment buildings/complexes will move toward drive-through/car-side service method. Staff will fill out paperwork (to avoid sharing pens).

### **Backpacks for Kids:**

- Participating schools are committed to keeping this program going during the school closure. Schools will communicate with participating families regarding procedures.

### **Countywide Pantry Network:**

- Food deliveries to our countywide pantry partners continue without interruption, to keep our 17 emergency food pantry partners stocked up and ready to meet food needs in their local communities. We are in continuous communication with all 17 of our countywide pantry site partners, to provide support and guidance on illness prevention procedures and distribution methods, for the safety of all.

**We will continue to update as more plans solidify.**

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### **Food for People**

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**Staff Phone Directory**



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